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## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

### Reflections during lockdown

A volunteer reflects on her personal experiences during the Covid-19 outbreak and also gives an insight into the challenges many people have faced when interacting in the digital world, rather than face to face. She also talks about some of the positives to come from this difficult situation but illustrates how the situation is far from over and describes how many people continue to struggle.

At the beginning, when the virus related restrictions were first imposed, I found it profoundly challenging living alone - as I wasn't able to visit any other people or have them visit me. I could go out to get shopping and to get medication but I couldn't meet up with anyone else – not even for a walk and I found it really hard and distressing when I looked out of my window and saw couples walking along the road arm in arm and family household groups going out together - it made me feel that I was a complete “billy no mates”. The isolation continued for a lengthy period of time and I found that very difficult - as I am a very sociable person and I have many friends and some family members too that I keep in touch with on a regular basis - mainly by seeing them and that is how I fill a big chunk of my time. Some of them live a distance away and visiting them involves a journey on a bus or train and I see this as an integral enjoyable part of the get together.

I don't have any grandchildren – it would have been quite nice to have that kind of remote contact and focus, as a form of support.

I participate in a number of community meetings and that generally takes up quite a lot of my time. At first, all of these were paused. I've found that as time has gone by, the meetings have resumed on a virtual basis - but that hasn't been a positive, in my case – as extensive online activity is a migraine trigger for me and this applies in relation to video participation with online platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams meetings - as the pictures on the screen keep changing / moving around. I tried a few video meetings at first - but I ended up developing a migraine after each one and so after three times, I realised that I needed to join on an audio only basis. That's okay as far as it goes - but you can't easily attract attention when you have a contribution to make and so are reliant on the chair of the meeting inviting you to speak - as “chipping in” can come across as unprofessional. Sometimes, on audio, you can get forgotten and so, overall, I find virtual meetings a bit of a personal struggle.

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Comfort breaks are often omitted during such meetings and the introduction sections are hard to manage and are also time consuming because the meeting chair has to invite each participant, by name, to introduce themselves and I find it frustrating that the introduction process takes so long and cuts down on the time available for agenda item discussions. It is so much easier, as regards introductions, when meetings take place “in person”.

When attending meetings in person, there is often an opportunity to network with other attendees – prior to and after meetings and also during break periods – not an easy option with virtual meetings.

A further negative has been that with people working from home and not in offices, it has not been possible to get lengthy documents printed off and posted to me at home. I can't read those documents online - as this is also a migraine trigger and once developed, a migraine can persist on and off for four days. Without the printed copies, I miss out on the information contained in the documents and so I am not fully informed and I am therefore unable to contribute as effectively as I normally would, when participating in the related discussions.

A positive aspect that has developed, during the lockdown period, is that I have had regular telephone chats with friends and relatives that I don't see very often during “normal times” – previously we had tended to keep in touch via text and email messages. This regular telephone contact is something that all parties have agreed will continue, on a permanent basis, going forward.

One of the things that I have found particularly rewarding, during lockdown and beyond, is the telephone befriending I've been doing with: Healthwatch Kirklees; The Royal Voluntary Service and The Denby Dale Centre Chatter Box scheme. I do like to help people. Telephone befriending has a bit of a skill to it. It is different from meeting people face to face because you can't see, from facial expressions and body language (useful signals), whether your approach to initial and subsequent chats is going down well. Your hearing becomes more acute though and you pick up on subtle indicators re it being best to avoid a particular subject and switch to a different one. I've really enjoyed talking to the people I've been linked up with - we have had conversations covering a wide variety of topics – such as about old cinemas (long gone) and churches in the Huddersfield area and we've also talked about our family backgrounds and where we have lived and what we have done in the past – including job roles.

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

I would like to highlight to people supporting older people, in whatever capacity, that the person we support was often, in the past, just as we are now. They may have had extensive family commitments; a demanding job role; undertaken voluntary work and experienced some very difficult life challenges. Over the years, they may have lost life partners; siblings and lifelong friends and also experienced failing health - to the point where they didn't have a great deal going on day to day – irrespective of the restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 virus. As we age, our world condenses down to the point where we can begin to experience isolation and loneliness. Losing the ability to act with spontaneity, due to disability and/or impairment, is a huge blow - particularly when a person has previously had a busy independent lifestyle. Befriending other people has reminded me that, for some people, very little has changed with the advent of the Covid 19 virus because they were already facing many of the related negative challenges. I feel very passionate about ensuring that we do not assume that everyone will be ok as regards going back to “how things were before”, once the virus has been defeated. When people spend many hours alone at home, they can become depressed and have no quality of life – leading to loss of self-confidence and self-esteem. They might have carers popping in a few times a day - but carers are often on a very tight schedule and generally don't have the time to engage in a meaningful conversation.

When you get chatting to people you discover the person that they were in the past and their life story - including what their interests and hobbies were/are - some people have been on holiday all around the world – often visiting places where you have been yourself.

When I first undertake a befriending role with someone who has become lonely and isolated, I liken them to a tightly closed flower bud and then, as the friendship progresses, it is amazing to be part of a process that leads to the flower bud gradually opening and blossoming - in terms of the positive effect that the friendship has on the person's emotional wellbeing. Feeling confident to share information, including fears and anxiety about matters that a person may be reluctant to discuss with family members, is a huge relief. This is not unique to the Covid 19 virus impact - people often don't want to put pressure on family members by saying: “To be honest, I often feel quite lonely”. It's nice that an individual can share those thoughts with a person that they can trust and sharing back is important too - highlighting that the uncertainty relating to the Covid 19 virus and all of the related and varying restrictions combined is causing anxiety and stress for everyone, in a variety of different ways and for different reasons.

I very much look forward to my befriending chats – as much, I hope, as my telephone friends do and it's surprising where the chats go; how much you have in common and what a small world it is.

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I think that I have managed to navigate reasonably well through the choppy waters created by the Covid 19 virus - but it has been a roller coaster ride and, looking back, I can identify the individual significant challenges that I have faced. I've had a few really bad days – reflecting on how things are in the virus focussed world - but then I have reminded myself of the fact that I'm not unique in undertaking that journey and it's made me even more aware as regards how challenging it must be for so many other people who don't have all the interests and options that I have got and who don't have family members and friends to ring for a supportive chat in times of great need.

I have found that some people who would normally have been very proactive as regards checking up to make sure that I am ok have not been in touch to anywhere near the same extent – as they have become engulfed in and preoccupied by all of the negative personal consequences relating to the virus - worrying about such as: whether they will still have a job/business going forward; older relatives at significant risk; being extremely vulnerable to the virus themselves; adapting to working from home and missing the social scene at work. When I proactively contact them they are often quite flat and down with it all. The virus has had a massive negative impact on people - a post-traumatic stress type scenario. I think this is because you can't currently rely on anything or make plans and feel confident that you will be able to carry them out – having only the option to: “pencil it in and see.....”

I was struggling to get clarity when certain restrictions were re-imposed in the Kirklees area – with specific regard to whether I could meet up with people from other households (who are not in my social bubble) outdoors at hospitality venues. It was impossible, at first, to locate specific related information and guidance – even the locally issued guidance was vague. I eventually had sight of a Kirklees Council bulletin that clarified the matter for me by specifying what could and couldn't be done by Kirklees residents and visitors from other areas – (the best approach with guidance, in my opinion). I found that a very negative experience – I didn't want to go against the regulations but, on the other hand and as a person living alone, I felt in need of companionship and not all of my friends are able to undertake walks.

The shielding guidance has now been paused and a friend has since experienced comments from others such as: “What's the problem – it's been withdrawn now?” The friend has said to me: “I'm still extremely vulnerable to the virus and just because the shielding guidance has been paused that doesn't mean that it is completely safe for me to get back out to visit shops; travel on buses and meet people at outdoor cafes.”

Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

Several friends have further commented that having shielded for as long as they did, it is very difficult for them to understand why the shielding guidance has now been paused, in Kirklees, when the local virus infection rate has been going up and we have got extra restrictions in place. The friends feel that the pausing of the guidance has led to other people having unrealistic expectations. It concerns me that people generally may also be finding that family members and friends are encouraging them to do things that they don't feel safe doing just yet. People saying such as: "Come on - it's ok for you to do that now" isn't at all helpful – it's almost like some people believe that the virus has gone away. I keep reassuring worried friends, in those circumstances, that they are right to proceed with caution – but despite such assurances, there continues to be a lot of related uncertainty; stress and anxiety out there.

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

### Covid Contemplations

A poem which paints a picture of everyday working and home life during lockdown

#### Covid Contemplations

What a change, the world's turned upside down,  
Unsure what to do, whether to laugh or frown.  
Constant news watch, changes galore - what is going on?  
Global pandemic, unsafe virus – where's normality gone?

More and more cases and no leaving my home,  
Bedroom's the new office, not far to roam.  
Partner's a carer, he continues working out and about,  
He's worried for his clients but doesn't gripe or shout.

Both of us keyworkers, worked all way through,  
Busy, busy, busy but at least we've something to do.  
Others in different positions, furloughed or worse,  
We might now be tired but been lucky with our purse.

Getting used to the changes, enjoying it more and more,  
Liking more time at home, extra chance therefore,  
To once again cook from scratch and bake,  
Or enjoy outdoor lunch and take a proper break.

Working by the window has given me chance to see,  
The neighbours, pets and general life from the world around me.  
More time for "hellos" to passers-by, life feels somehow calmer,  
Even chance after work to garden while the weather's warmer.

I've heard children laughing and dogs bark,  
Seen families spending time together on the way to the park.  
Rabbits escaped from hutches and cats lazing in the sun,  
The small sights I've noticed have given me such fun.

Unsure what the future holds and only time will tell,  
For the moment I remain at home, using my little grey cells!  
Colder seasons now approach and it could look a different business,  
But to look on the positive, at least it not far from Christmas!

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

### A focus on bereavement

A moving account from a bereaved parent who found opportunity to reflect on her feelings during lockdown and embark on a journey of rediscovery.

Another key and very challenging thing for me has been dealing with matters relating to bereavement during the lockdown period. Even now – with some of the restrictions having been lifted and then re-imposed - coping with poignant anniversaries and memories has been the hardest thing of all for me.

With my usual sources of support and coping strategies being unavailable, I've found that my brain has still had to have input and when it couldn't find it in the present, it sought it within my memory bank and even though I might have, theoretically speaking, put a notice on the gateway saying: "Entry not permitted here at present" - my brain has ignored that and gone through the gateway anyway and I've found myself going back over things from the past: the "what if" and "what might have been" scenarios and that has proved to be very emotionally challenging.

With a particular focus on my late son, John – fortunately I have been able to visit his grave as part of daily walking. I know of other people, though, who haven't had that option and that has been very distressing for them.

For a long time now, myself as a bereaved parent had been hidden behind my professional persona of going to meetings; delivering presentations and providing both carer and service user insight and representation. I did not make a conscious decision "to hide" – it was just a by-product of my busy lifestyle.

During lockdown, I embarked on an enforced journey which I called: "Finding John's Mum" - identifying and addressing her personal wellbeing issues. I've met up for distanced walks with other bereaved parents via The Compassionate Friends – a peer group which provides an opportunity to both give and receive support. The face to face meetings have been paused due to the Covid 19 virus - but support is still available via virtual Zoom meetings; over the telephone and via face to face socially distanced walks.



Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

The next stage of my journey - which I haven't started on yet – will be entitled: “Rediscovering Lynne as an individual”. I've been through a process of confirming to myself that I am now ready to step back from a lot of the high level community work that I do. I've done the best I can, in that regard. I've used John's story to very positive effect and, between us, we have helped many, many people. Things are being done very differently now, as a result of the work that I have undertaken as part of a team and I've achieved far more than I ever expected I would. I'm carrying on with things for now - as I haven't got a great deal else to do and I can still have positive input and it gives my brain something to focus on - but when we come out the other end of this extraordinary and unprecedented Covid 19 virus experience, I will be cutting down significantly – albeit not completely. I want more quality time with family and friends and also more “me time”.

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

### We are a 'shielding family' – get us out of here!

This account tells of the challenging experience of living in a family where people needed to shield in their home. When shielding ended, the family still had to make difficult decisions about the safest way to try and resume some semblance of a 'normal' life

You would think shielding would be the easier option- not going out, not putting yourself at risk been safe at home. Our isolation started early when my child with a health condition was sent home from school with headache the week before lockdown. I left work that day not to know I would not be returning to the office for many months. I don't think anyone could have explained the fear, anxiety and overwhelming feelings I would encounter and the difference in how I would be leading my life from then onwards. I find it hard to remember the state of mind I was in at that time but I know it wasn't good. This state appears at times still.

You see, my husband is in the shielding group (extremely clinically vulnerable group) plus my teenage child is in the vulnerable group- didn't we land the lucky dice?? I think it may have been week three before my husband received the text and letter to say here are the guidelines you could become very seriously ill should you get the corona virus- keep a hospital bag handy. Luckily we had done our research and knew this was the case and arranged friends and family who knew our predicament to help with shopping and medication collection. The guidance was anyone shielding to stay home and anyone living with them to stay 2 meters apart, use different bathrooms and sleeping areas unless shielding too. It was not a difficult decision as we don't live in a stately home we were all in it for the duration.

End of May I think was the small turning point for shielders, when it was announced that they could mix with the people they live with if they were not shielding with them and go outside for daily exercise with one other person as long as they stayed 2 metres apart and ideally picking the same person to go with, cutting down on the risks. We had in fact weighed up the risk ourselves of exercising outdoors after 9 or 10 weeks of exercising in the garden (which shielders were not advised to do) and the front room. We as a family needed, for our sanity, to venture out. It was affecting us all the daily updates, the fear, the need to feel part of society. We decided if we left it any longer my child's mental health along with my husband's would suffer more. Our child was beginning to fear outdoors, even in the garden. We chose carefully, taking the car, as we live in a busy area, to a quiet place to feel the sun on our faces and the fresh air. On the first occasion we stopped a few times in different areas to consider how busy it was and found ourselves driving on to find a 'safer' spot. It was both exhilarating and scary that first few times. We eventually got into a routine to make sure we didn't meet anyone but it felt better. It was hard, I won't lie, to see posts from friends and family, 'love where you live', all enjoying the local areas around them during those first 10 weeks. It was good see too how the community were coming together. Missing close friends and family members, needing a small hug or big at times from my support network outside my home.

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

I could go on, but let's move forward to when shielding was lifted, 1st August, not an easy shift I can tell you especially as another local lockdown was announced at the same time. We found ourselves asking how is this safer now? We haven't changed much as we don't feel as if we have caught up as yet to the general community, we all feel so far behind. I think we needed more guidance as shielding lifted and much more reassurance to how to feel safe again.

I think for me particularly it has been hard to see the lack of social distancing in my local area, people flouting the rules to suit lifestyles. Will I feel the same when we have caught up with this sort of life people have lived with for months now? Shouts of 'come on shielding is over now', 'come to the pub with us', 'why are you walking so distanced?' Please try to understand what we have been through and the constant battle to join in with 'normal life'. I suppose it's hard to understand the decisions I'm making are different from you because of the devastating effects it could have on my family. Be kind, don't push me, hold my hand (distanced obviously) through this, but please don't give up on me and leave me behind!

I'm still me just a little shaken now.

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

### Locked inside

Here we have a poem from Ravensknowle, a residential setting for people with a learning disability

#### *Locked Inside*

At Ravensknowle Road we're locked inside,  
From Covid-19 we're trying to hide  
Missing our families, missing our friends,  
When oh when will this lockdown end,

We keep ourselves busy,  
We have lots of fun,  
From morning till night,  
We get so much done,

Parties and theme days,  
And afternoon tea,  
Singing and dancing,  
Games on the Wii

Walks round the garden,  
Through sunshine and rain,  
Keeping healthy and busy,  
So we don't go insane

Facetime on the portal,  
A chat on the phone,  
Keeping in touch,  
We're not in this alone

Clapping for carers,  
And NHS too,  
Who are keeping us safe  
And helping us through!

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

### Just a country girl

Lots of positive aspects of lockdown come to life in this story. Making the best of a challenging situation and doing things to feel good and to support others.

I felt content at the start of the lockdown – the weather was brilliant and I did the walk every day, sat in the sun and read my book, did knitting and even started cleaning a bit – something I hate with a passion. We devised ways of avoiding shopping and using our supplies in creative ways. We considered ourselves very lucky as we live in a village surrounding by lovely walks and open countryside. Our garden is also a nice place to sit and enjoy the views.

My family also did a weekly Quiz Night on a Sunday and the challenges have become a joy to take part in. Let's think what we have done – Poems, Octopus, Puppets of ourselves, Building a Boat, Paint a Bird, Paper Folding, Devise a novel way of throwing an object in a bin. Each week, each team have made them more complicated with videos and sound tracks. It has been fun, fun, fun.

I also learned a new skill creating a monthly Newsletter for my Armchair Exercise Group. I thought it very important to keep in contact with them, many of whom are in their eighties and they would be the ones most affected by the 'lock-down'. I found Publisher on my computer and am quite the expert now, downloading, copying and pasting!

As conditions slackened a bit my husband and I (I sound like the Queen, sorry) had a few short outings in the car. We took a flask and sandwiches and even though it was sometimes raining and we staying inside the car it was wonderful to wind the windows down and feel the fresh air on your face. Weather permitting, we were able to take pictures so these I used in the Newsletter along with details about where we had been. I found the Newsletter was getting more about me so I encouraged others to submit things of interest. Eventually after four issues it now contains a regular piece from one of my volunteers who is never short of a word or two, comic pieces I have come across, bits of history about the places we have visited and hints and tips about how you can get the best from essential oils. Challenges and quizzes to improve concentration and a bit of brain exercise. You can tell I am quite proud of the result – wow its cost quite a lot in ink for my four page publications.

The Newsletter has been well received and small gifts, some supplied by the charity Aspire have added to the surprise each month. The craft sets and the Mindfulness colouring books with felt tips were particularly a joy. Thanks to them for providing this very useful resource.

I also used Publisher to produce personalised cards for my family and friend and found this a delight and they were equally as pleased with the results.

Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

I am a bit outdated with my IT systems and have just recently lost my loyalty to my old mobile – Doro - which has served me well and seemed sufficient for my needs. I have found this a bit of a disadvantage though with me being involved in community work and various meetings which have all been done via Zoom. I felt totally out of the loop.

Through a casual conversation I have acquired an I Phone which I know will take me a while to come to terms with but will give me much more flexibility and maintain my links with both my community colleagues but also make it easy to contact family and friends. Just waiting of it to be unlocked. Next comes the big job of transferring all my numbers from one gadget to the next – not looking forwarding the manually writing them out but I think this is the only way from one old system to a new.

I have even put my name down to borrow a Tablet (not the pill variety!) this includes some free training I believe – also through Aspire. This is particularly for people over 55 (yes I meet that adequately). So watch this space I may be coming to house near you!

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

### March stopped the clock

A poem which tells of the initial shock felt by many when the Covid-19 pandemic hit; the fear, the uncertainty, the battle against an invisible enemy.

March, March what a shock?

A virus came and stopped the clock,

Tick tock, tick tock the weeks passed by and all we could do was hope and sigh,  
Some found it hard to cope, others thought it a big joke.

"What shall we do?" the fearful shout, let's shut our doors and trap it out.

Others roamed around the streets and spread the virus to the weak,

The virus raged and spread the land, we weren't allowed to shake a hand.

"Let's flatten the curve" the scientists warned, some just laughed and others scorned.

Most tried to do their bit, bending the rules a tiny bit.

"When will it stop?" the public cried, when will the dying all subside?

We are trapped, we are stuck, we are all indoors, wearing gloves and cleaning doors.

Rainbows painted in windows bright, to spread the news it would be alright!

Let's have some hope, let's fight this thing, we are not going to let it win!

Moving tides and stormy seas saw things change at breakneck speed.

First in, then out with altered plans. Love where you live, new nature fans.

Down the paths and in the woods, birds are tweeting and people greeting, nature's  
blooming, the world's still moving, with new blue skies for all to see.

Slowly, slowly to the future go, with hugs and laughs and better times to show.

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

### Mid July – a letter to a friend

A chatty letter about daily life, 4 months on from the start of the Covid-19 outbreak. The letter also looks back on World War 1, the Spanish Flu outbreak and the NHS.

Hello my friend

Mid July already and many people are echoing the thoughts we all have as we get older “Where has this year gone?” – More so the past 4 months since our world changed.

Have we taken the enforced change of circumstances to take stock of our lives and perhaps make lasting changes? Has the lockdown encouraged us to “go within” or look inside ourselves to see if we like our personality? What have you found out about yourself that you didn’t know before?

For myself I can say that my life continues much as it did in the early part of this year, when I found myself without a vehicle and therefore confined to barracks or dependant on others for transport. (I’m sounding like a broken record, repeating myself due to lack of anything new on this front). I miss the regular exercise classes not only because I do not motivate myself to do regular keep fit routines at home but also I miss sharing anecdotes about life with friends who appreciate my sense of humour. I am more inclined to encourage others to “always look on the bright side of life”, whilst having to consciously remind myself to “turn that frown upside down”.

This week has been busy here on the farm as the men have cut the grass fields to make silage for winter feed. Some fields of recent reseeds have produced a great heavy swath that has made many bales per acre, whereas the previously grazed land has a lighter crop – still worth baling rather than allowing the cattle to spoil it as they eagerly munch their way round the whole field.

We took some cattle to market in the early hours of Wednesday morning (we being optimistic – I was fast asleep in bed whilst Dan and Chris actually did the work), that made good money as they were prime cattle and the price per kilo was a nice bit higher than last month.

I had an adventure yesterday in that I walked down to Kirkheaton for a pedicure; actually I don’t know if it would be termed that as it was with the podiatrist who is medically qualified rather than a beautician (apparently there are differences that explain why some places are allowed to trade whilst others wait for the government announcements about when they can re-open). Afterwards my friend called to see me and we had a good chin wag. In between times the garden fairy had been to cut the grass. (She’s called Cathy and is a real person who does good deeds for us and is a gardener by trade; I saw her leaving Mum’s as I walked past).



## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

This week I've read a book that I thoroughly enjoyed and found hard to put down – *Kate's Story* by Billy Hopkins. It is "a heart-rending tale of northern family life at the turn of the century", telling the true life story of Catherine Lally from her eleventh birthday on the day of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in June 1897, (*note, just amended as I transposed the numbers from 1987 the year we got married*) up to the birth of her son (the author) in 1928.

What I particularly enjoyed about the book was the rich description of everyday life, the local dialect, the matter of fact way families lived in houses with an outside earthen closed shared between the neighbours. The book describes ordinary working class lifestyles where the husband is the breadwinner and the wife stays home to cook, clean, do the laundry and look after the children. The warmth, laughter and triumph over adversity are what endeared me to the characters found within the pages of the novel.

I notice that "Monday, 3 August, was a Bank Holiday" and wonder why this is no longer the case and we have the August Bank Holiday as the last Monday in the month rather than the first?

History tales recount that many of the soldiers in the Great War enlisted in return for the King's shilling at a young age: This is easily explained when the sergeant said "I didn't hear you properly. Did you say eighteen and one month?" to which the young man replied "I did".

A thing which I have never had cause to question in my lifetime is the freely available National Health Service; but life before this is vividly illustrated in the case of a child who had a sore throat, serious enough for the family to call the doctor who was away so a young locum came for a home visit the following morning. Despite the doctor advising there was no need to worry, just keep her comfortable and give her plenty of fluids, she died that night fighting for breath and the cause of death was written as German measles. She was buried in a public subscription grave with her name on it. When the usual doctor came to visit he found the two younger sisters in bed with sore throats and diagnosed the same illness but he specified Diphtheria and they were taken by ambulance within the hour to a fever hospital.

When another child died the funeral director was unable to organise transport due to lots of soldier funerals being held so the mother had to carry the small baby's coffin herself (she wasn't allowed to take it on the tram as it was against regulations). There were two funerals held in the same place at the same time and the other's family agreed to let the baby be buried with the soldier.

There are tales of food shortages well into 1918 and what little was available was expensive, except for bread – which price never went up throughout the war. Queues formed at six o'clock in the morning outside food shops and there were near riots when the copper on duty announced there was no more and the ladies were advised to return home.

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

As the war was over the ordinary men and women asked what it was all for – millions of men killed and maimed so that we could keep our honour. It was thought that they had suffered just about everything that fate could throw at them: War, death, famine. A comment was made regarding the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, missing Pestilence (don't tempt providence).

Spanish flu meant that doctors were in great demand but short supply as they were rushed off their feet on house calls to people going down rapidly with peculiar coughs and flecks of blood from the mouth. It is recorded that the doctor was wearing a flesh coloured gauze mask which gave off a strong smell of cinnamon and cloves, despite which he died in early 1919. This illness was a pandemic which spread right across the world and in some parts of Asia and Africa whole populations had been swept away. The Daily Express reckoned that it killed twenty-seven million people across the world (twice as many as the war). The strange thing about it was that it proved most deadly for people in their prime, between the ages of 20 and 40, who had either a speedy recovery or a speedy death. There was much speculation and propaganda about where the flu bug originated; some gossip in the local pub putting forth the theory that it was a secret weapon of the Germans, let loose to get revenge for losing the war.

When the death toll in Britain reached two hundred thousand, Lloyd George began making regulations and issuing advice. Good ventilation and fresh air were thought to be the best measures for prevention, and any gathering which involved mixing of bodies or sharing of breath was banned. Schools, dance halls, and cinemas were closed and big public funerals were forbidden since they meant crowds. Trams and buses were thought to be a special menace because of their bad ventilation.

As well as the normal flu symptoms of headache and fever there were also dizziness, a harsh cough and endless sneezing. People were advised to stop borrowing books, stop shaving, and stop shaking hands. Arranging funeral services was no easy matter as there was a terrible shortage of undertakers and grave-diggers. The authorities had to make use of the cold meat storage depot as the bodies piled up. Regulations allowed only fifteen minutes getting through the funeral service because there was another cortege waiting outside.

This was likened to the Black Death and the bubonic plague learned about in school but worse because more people died and was thought by some to be the end of civilisation. These fears did not materialise because mysteriously the "Spanish Lady" faltered and by the end of 1919 she was gone.

What parallels we can see between the rapid spread worldwide of the influenza virus then and now. What lessons has humanity learned? Are the measures of the past still up to date and relevant today? Did the wearing of masks make a difference? Should we try the old fashioned remedies of goose-grease poultices and salt up the nose? (They either killed or cured). Strong doses of whisky and sugar in a glass of hot milk was a very popular remedy. *(My take on this is whisky, honey and lemon in hot water or a non-alcoholic alternative of turmeric, honey, cinnamon and ginger in hot milk).*

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

In summary then I echo the sentiment “This too shall pass”: In the meantime it is acceptable to identify your support needs (and who you want to provide them), as outlined below:-

Moral support (support in terms of spirit).

Physical support (spending time with you, physical presence, companionship).

Emotional support (listening to you, understanding your problems, encouraging you on).

Intellectual support (ideas, recommendations, analysis).

Resource support (sharing contacts, loaning money, providing valid resources, etc.).

Finally know that you are being sent this letter because in some way you are part of my support network, as I hope I am part of yours.

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

### New walking route

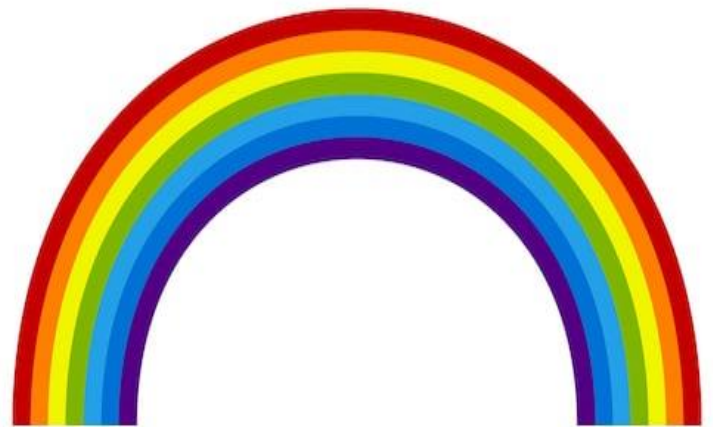
Even in the darkest days, the most beautiful things can be found.

Sometimes we are forced into situations that are out of our control.

There's a wise old saying that everything happens for a reason and with such sadness happening not only in my little town of Mirfield but the world, the reason seemed hard to find.

Although lockdown was such a worrying time for myself and my family I look back on lockdown and I do have fond memories.

I moved to Mirfield just under 2 years ago, myself, my partner and my little dog enjoyed a frequent walk around Hopton woods, which is a short drive from my house, but then suddenly going to our usual walking spot was out of bounds, GO HOME signs on fences and cable ties around car park gates left us feeling even more out of sorts. With a dog to walk and eager to get out of the house into nature, we were forced to walk around our house, one day we noticed a public footpath sign and followed it, and discovered the most wonderful walk right outside our front door, we watched as spring bloomed and our new woodland walk filled with bluebells, we felt the morning sunshine on our faces and we appreciate the time to find our new favourite walking route



## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

### Thoughts on history

A course on mindfulness and compassion led to this person working on developing some good habits and reflecting on the history of Britain.

I've been doing things a little differently this week, having decided to be more mindful. Change is hard if one tries to do too much all at once, however small things done repeatedly lead to new habits easily formed over time. (Bad habits are easy to form but hard to live with: Good habits are hard to form but easy to live with).

It all started with a decision. I decided to sign up for a course on Mindfulness and Compassion as a six week course was offered online from the comfort of my own home at my favourite price - FREE. I have done a mindfulness course in the past about 4 years ago and continue to benefit from regular meditation as a follow on from that with the same tutor and some original course members along with others who have studied more recently.

The first practice that we, a group of 8 students, are encouraged to do for a week is to mindfully eat three mouthfuls of one meal each day. As an example of this we were talked through eating a raisin in a mindful manner. With mindful eating one is first encouraged to observe the food, noting the colour, shape, size, smell and even sound of the object. This is before it gets anywhere near your mouth. As you put the raisin to your mouth, bite off a part of it and roll it round feeling it on your tongue, in the side of your cheek, up near the roof of your mouth. Feel the texture before carefully biting and chewing the morsel. This is a great way to get your saliva and digestive enzymes working to fully break down each mouthful of food so that you can get the full benefit from the nutrition inside.

"Laughter is low calorie, caffeine free, and has no salt, preservatives or additives. It's 100% natural and one size fits all" – Zig Ziglar.

It is often said that "We are what we eat", or rather "We are what we eat and can absorb from the food". New thinking on these lines is "We are what we eat, can absorb and also what we eliminate". Much of our environment is laden with toxins that seep into our bodies in obvious ways, from the pesticides sprayed on our crops to the artificial additives in packaged food and drink. I've been applying detox foot patches every night when I go to bed. These are very easy to use as they are about the size and shape of tea-bags (Yorkshire square ones, not Tetley round ones) and stick on backing pads to the soles of your feet. In the morning as you remove them they have changed from dry to wet, black, sticky and sometimes smelly things. I certainly feel that when I use them on a regular basis they ease the aches and pains in my body and change the feeling from heavy legs to walking on air, light as a feather.

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

The morning routine now as a matter of new habit consists of finding a meditation on my i-pad to set the day off to a good start by setting my mind to a calm, positive course. The Headspace app is visually good with The Wake Up being a short video or animation giving direction or education, even just a new way of seeing a familiar situation. Also I have noticed that some meditations have background music that is best listened to through headphones because it consists of binaural beats that calm the mind by altering the brainwave patterns, using alpha, beta, theta and delta frequencies.

Over the past week I have found a programme on television about life in Victorian Britain that showed the changes over a few decades, which I have eagerly tuned into each day. Modern day families were transported back in time to live a life of poverty and deprivation such as their ancestors would have experienced. This was a very realistic way of educating not only the participants but also the viewers, as it brought to life the dilemmas faced by families who had to start with nothing and earn enough to put a roof over their heads and food in their bellies.

Even though I studied a short course at Northern College about Life in Victorian Britain, which concentrated on similar themes – life in poverty, rather than the lives led by the upper classes – I think that seeing life enacted in full colour (grey, brown, black) brought home to me what drudgery and utter exhaustion these people lived with. The series showed me that the families were poor through no fault of their own. I think that I have always subconsciously had a feeling that everyone is born equal - that is with nothing - and yet some rise up from humble origins to become great leaders or wealthy individuals, whereas others born to a life of wanting for nothing lack a purpose or drive to succeed and soon fall into bad ways because they have no sense of self-worth.

When I was at school I didn't choose to study history because I failed to see the value in learning from the mistakes of the past so that they would not be repeated. Rather the way history was taught made it more a case of learning dates without understanding the background stories about what, when, why, where, how and who. (Rudyard Kipling – I keep six honest serving men, they taught me all I knew, their names are What and Why and When and How and Where and Who).

Similarly, I have last week and this watched a television programme on Saturday morning about Life in the Factory. This is a more modern view of women working in clothing factories during my lifetime. Again there are valuable lessons to be learned from how women (and children, abroad) are exploited as cheap labour and not valued in the same way as men.

Is history going round in circles again? Are we doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past or are we learning from them in order to progress? Is this time of great change in our lifetime one that will see better futures for our children and grand-children? Are women being valued as home-makers as they stay home to educate their children and go back to home cooked food freshly prepared each day? Am I valued? What value do I bring to the lives of others? It is said that the quality of our lives depends on the questions we ask ourselves.

Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

“The purpose of our lives is to give birth to the best which is within us” - Marianne Williamson.

“Happiness is not a goal; it is a by-product”- Eleanor Roosevelt

“Be happy with what you have and are, be generous with both, and you won’t have to hunt for happiness” – William E Gladstone.

“Wealth is the ability to fully experience life” – Henry David Thoreau

“The future is no more uncertain than the present” – Walt Whitman

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

### Experience of the pandemic from an older person and a carer

Thoughts on everyday life, accessing healthcare, using technology and support available from volunteers in the community.

#### Older person:

Being older with mobility issues I don't want to go out often and living with my family has helped as they went out and brought back the things we needed during lockdown. Watching the news at times is a little worrying, and I am sure it is especially for anyone living on their own. Now things are opening up I have started to go out with my family but I am very careful where I go and avoid crowds. I don't like to wear the mask it is really uncomfortable but I do if I need to go into a shop. I have had a telephone appointment with a nurse and will be going into the surgery to have blood tests, but I have to go in alone. I am also having a video call with a doctor, I don't use new technology so my family have to help me with it. I struggle to hear over the phone so it is not the best way for me to get the help I need but I have been told it will help to speed things up and it is helping to keep me and everyone safe. I hope things will soon get back to normal and I can see the doctor in person but I am now getting my prescriptions sent through the post which is really good and I will continue with this service.

#### Carer

Being a working carer and having all the family at home during lock down was at times stressful. At first it seemed like I was constantly in the kitchen preparing meals for everyone and trying to support/ balance my work and the emotions of 5 others all under one roof, thankfully I had a garden to retreat into and the weather was kind. It will seem really strange when I have to go back into a set routine being out of the house all day and I am not really sure how the person I care for will manage with me not being 'visibly' around during the day again. I was overwhelmed by the support offered through volunteers, having a vulnerable person in the home, we were shielding and someone offered to take my dogs for walks for me, and social media seemed to have stories shared where so many people were offering to help anyone that needed it. I really hope the community continues to stick together offering support, having that same 'mind-set' when we do all return to work. I am currently waiting to get an appointment at the hospital for myself and I don't know when that will be as my appointment was cancelled by them and they said they could not say when another date would be offered. The GP surgery I am with were really good and also offer an e consultation, it's an on line form to get advice and treatment on common problems and mental health by the end of the next working day.



## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

### A poem to ME warriors

This poem alludes to the fact that people with ME have experienced, for a long time, some of the symptoms and effects similar to the ones caused by Covid-19, and feel that the pandemic has highlighted their struggle to have their concerns taken seriously.

A Poem to M.E Warriors

Remember the challenges but also the awareness,  
Suddenly everyone felt the unfairness,  
Staying at home to protect yourself,  
Was something to be commended in itself,  
Instead of rushing from place to place,  
The whole world started to pace,  
Research into Post-Covid syndrome then occurred,  
Why did it have to impact the masses for us to be heard?  
This is not what anyone deserved,  
Yet for once, we were ahead of this unfortunate curve.

## Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

### A mother first

A parent carer shared a poem which highlights the challenges faced on a daily basis

You see me laugh without a care but what a story I need to share,  
A parent carer it's so true to say but a mother first though any day,  
It's hard some days you'll understand to raise a smile and carry on,  
with fear and worry about my child, after sleepless nights and holding  
hands.

The emotions bubble we lose the plot, trying to hold things together  
sometimes takes a lot!

Friends support, they talk it through but do they really understand  
what I'm going through?

The decisions I make are they the right ones for him? The unease  
starts to surface the tears start to brim.

We are just planning an outing with his friends on his own, it  
shouldn't be this hard, let's get back in the zone.

We did it, it worked move on to the next, I take a deep breath and  
await the next test.

The pride that I feel when I look at him cope it stops all my moping  
and give me new hope. I need to relax I know this is true, but  
sometimes it's easier to say than to do!



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Stories and Creative Feedback from Adults

